Questions and Comments

Questions and comments raised at the Aug 29 public information workshop and in response to the Aug. newsletter followed by responses from BLM and Western staff.

Question: ***What is the BTU value of natural gas? How much natural gas will be burned per hour?***

Answer: Natural gas has about 1,000 British Thermal Units (BTUs) per standard cubic foot. The proposed power plant would have three natural gas combustion turbines, totaling 495 megawatts. The three combustion units would consume about 5.2 billion BTUs, or 5.2 million standard cubic feet of natural gas, per hour.

Question: ***What would be the depth of the evaporation pond if sized at 18 acres? 15 acres?***

Answer: Since the August 29 public meeting, Caithness has completed additional engineering evaluations. Based on the additional engineering evaluations, Caithness would construct a two-cell brine disposal/evaporation pond system. Each of the two cells would be double lined and incorporate a leak detection system designed to meet state regulatory requirements. Total acreage of the evaporation pond would be 17.5 acres with a depth of about 15 feet.

Question: ***What is the potential of Phelps Dodge using water discharged from the power plant to reduce the amount of water pumped from the upper aquifer by Phelps Dodge? This should be considered as an alternative in the EIS.***

Answer: Based upon additional testing of the ground water quality and further engineering of the power plant, Caithness has decided to increase the number of cycles which the cooling water will make through the cooling towers, which means that the waste cooling water will likely not be suitable for Phelps Dodge. In addition, any transfer of water from Caithness to Phelps Dodge would require regulatory approval because it would be an interbasin transfer. BLM and Western will evaluate the reasonableness of any water reuse alternatives and, if any are determined to be feasible, will address them as alternatives in the EIS.

Question: ***Who owns the wells being monitored?***

Answer: All of the wells monitored during the well tests conducted by Caithness are located on property owned by Caithness. Cofer Hot Spring, which also was monitored during the recent pump test, is located in the southwest corner of section 25, Township 16 North, Range 13 West on land which is privately owned by another party. Caithness obtained permission from the landowner to monitor the flows from Cofer Hot Spring during the test.

Request: ***The EIS should discuss agencies' monitoring requirements.***

Answer: The EIS will disclose any agency monitoring requirements based on permitting requirements. In addition, BLM and Western, in consultation with the cooperating agencies, may propose additional monitoring requirements in connection with mitigation measures proposed to reduce potentially adverse environmental impacts. If additional monitoring requirements are developed as a result of the EIS process, they will be addressed in BLM's and Western's Records of Decision and, if adopted, would be addressed in a mitigation action plan issued by Western and/or right-of-way grants issued by BLM.

Request: ***Copies of the project newsletters should be made available at the BLM office.***

Answer: BLM and Western will ensure that future newsletters are made available in places convenient for the public, including the BLM office in Kingman. Copies of all newsletters, as well as other information regarding the Big Sandy Energy Project, are available on Western's Big Sandy Energy Project web site (www.wapa.gov/interconn/intsandy.htm) or by contacting the Western or BLM project manager.

Question: ***Will necessary rights-of-way be secured prior to construction across state trust land parcels?***

Answer: The proposed natural gas pipeline would cross some state trust land parcels. Caithness, or an interstate natural gas pipeline company selected to build the pipeline, would apply for, and must receive prior to construction, state right-of-way grants from the Arizona State Land Department.

Question: ***Will land values be affected by the proposed project? Will property values be increased or decreased?***

Answer: The EIS will include an analysis of the project's effects on land values.

Question: ***Will more streets or roads be planned in this area?***

Answer: Mohave County currently proposes to provide access to the power plant site from U.S. Highway 93 by constructing a new county road, which would be paid for by Caithness. This access road would be located just south of the U.S. Highway 93 bridge over the Big Sandy River and would generally follow section lines to the power plant site.

Questions and Comments, continued

Question: ***What effect would the project have on private property parcels? Would Caithness provide any compensation?***

Answer: The EIS will address both the potential direct and indirect effects of the proposed project to private parcels. Private party parcels directly affected by the project (that is, parcels which would be directly disturbed by construction activities) would likely be limited to a few parcels crossed by the proposed natural gas pipe line. Potential indirect impacts to private parcels would include air emissions, noise, and visual impacts from fugitive dust emissions during construction and occasional cooling tower plumes. However, as the distance between the proposed power plant and other private parcels increases, the potential for, and magnitude of, these indirect impacts decreases. Private party parcels directly disturbed by the project would likely be compensated through individual private-party agreements.

Question: ***Does the plant affect the water table? Is water close to the surface if a group of homes were built just south of Wikieup?***

Answer: The EIS will analyze whether or not the project will affect the ground water table. To do this a program for conducting a ground water well pump test, which included pumping water from a production well and observing any effects in nearby observation wells, was developed and reviewed by several agency and consulting hydrologists. The test was completed in late September. The results (which are still being reviewed by the agencies) will be used, together with a basin-wide water budget, to help the EIS assess the potential long-term effects of the project on ground and surface waters. The results of the EIS assessment will help the agency decision-makers decide if monitoring and mitigation are needed to protect the area's water supply, including water close to the surface south of Wikieup.

Question: ***Would it not be wiser to use Colorado River water than use the aquifer? A plant located near Lake Havasu City using the river water would be ideal.***

Answer: The EIS will address the availability of water for the project from the Colorado River. BLM and Western are still developing the full range of alternatives that will be addressed in the EIS.

Question: ***Where can we get factual information about the size, type and process Caithness is proposing to use with regard to their evaporation pond(s)? What type of liners is [sic} going to be utilized as a sealer for the pond(s)? What governmental agency regulates this portion of the facility and who is the contact person?***

Answer: The EIS will include the specifics on the size, type and process that Caithness will use to handle water discharges from the power plant. Based on the latest engineering evaluation, Caithness would use a two-cell brine disposal/evaporation pond system. Each of the two cells would be double lined and incorporate a leak detection system designed to meet state regulatory requirements. The total acreage of the evaporation pond would be 17.5 acres with a depth of about 15 feet. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality has jurisdiction over the brine disposal ponds. Caithness must obtain an Aquifer Protection Permit (APP). The ADEQ Aquifer Protection Project Officer may be reached at 602-207-4573.

Question: ***What type and volume of pollutants/contaminants are produced? List every chemical.***

Answer: The EIS will include a list of the types and volumes of pollutants/contaminants. Chemicals that would be used at the plant site will be listed in the EIS.

Question: ***Exactly where are they to be located?***

Answer: The EIS will identify the areas within the plant site where chemicals and wastes will be stored prior to use and/or disposal.

Question: ***Will the plant be mining water? At what rate?***

Answer: The results of the ground water pump test, completed in September, will be used, together with a basin-wide water budget, to assess the potential long-term effects of the project on ground waters, including an assessment of whether or not the project would be "mining" the ground water and at what rate (that is, removing ground water faster than being recharged). The EIS will include the results of the assessments.

Question: ***When will electricity be available for us that spend the winter months next to the power plant?***

Answer: The current project schedule anticipates that the first phase of the Big Sandy Energy Project would be operational in November 2002. Citizen's Utilities and Mohave Electric Cooperative, which both serve portions of Mohave County, could pursue purchasing power from the Big Sandy Energy Project, or numerous other power suppliers in the current deregulated utility environment.